After Life

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After Life

by justheretoreadhannibalfics

Summary

Will Graham is obsessed. With a dead serial killer. He doesn't think it's really anything to worry about. It's not like being obsessed with someone who's dead is going to make him do anything he'll regret.

...right?

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

“Hey man, what’s up?”

Will looked up, habitually blocking Beverly’s eyes with the thick frame of his glasses. He clutched the book he was holding tighter, as if she had threatened to take it from him.

“Nothing,” Will said. It’s what he always said in response to that question. He hadn’t found a better one yet.

Beverly huffed and rolled her eyes, but she was smiling.

“Alright, well, what are you reading?”

Again, Will’s grip on the book tightened instinctively, but he made himself relax. Beverly wouldn’t mock him, or try to take it from him. So, Will tipped the book towards Beverly so she could see what it was.

Beverly peered at the book for a second before she grinned.

“Still on about that guy, huh?” she asked.

Will shrugged.

“He’s fascinating,” he said as his only explanation.

Beverly sighed and shook her head again.

“You need a girlfriend,” she said, paused, then, “or a boyfriend. I know you swing both ways.”

Will frowned and looked back down at his book.

Most of the time, it felt like he swung no way. The last time he had even felt really attracted to anyone had been Alana, and she had given him a resounding no. Before that, he’d liked a guy in high school, but he’d never done anything about it. He just didn’t feel that way about many people.

If he could choose who he felt that way about, it might have been better. He could have chosen that girl who had nervously asked him out last semester. It would have been convenient, at least.

“I think I’m going to write a paper about him,” Will said, instead of talking about his romantic prospects.

Beverly sighed softly and dropped herself into the chair across the table from him. Will had been studying in the library, and she had probably known that was where he would be. More often than not, that’s where he spent his time.

“You mean you haven’t already?” she asked.

Will smiled.

“I’ve thought about it,” he said, “but I never felt like I’d really, uh, gotten to know him yet.”

Beverly raised an eyebrow.

“And now you do?” she asked.

Will shrugged.

“Almost,” he answered.

What Will didn’t say was that he was going to do something stupid, and probably illegal, in order to get to know him. She would try to talk him out of it.

Especially because she believed in ghosts.

“Well, the Chesapeake Ripper isn’t going anywhere,” she said, “he’s been dead for thirty-two years.”

“Thirty-five,” Will corrected, “how long do ghosts stick around, by the way? Is there, like, a statute of limitations for them?”

Beverly grinned.

“That entirely depends on who you ask,” she said.

“I’m asking *you*,” Will shot back, and Beverly laughed.

“I think it’s something that changes with each ghost,” she said, “it depends on how strong their connection to this world was when they died, if they had unfinished business, and if they wanted to stick around at all. Ghosts don’t happen for no reason.”

Will nodded.

From what he knew about Doctor Hannibal Lecter, which was just about everything there was to know, he thought the man would have stuck around if he had the choice. He didn’t think he was filled with rage or was particularly unsatisfied with what he had accomplished, but Will thought he would have been curious. Curious what he could do as a ghost.

But Will didn’t know how long he would have stuck around.

“Did you know his house is still there?” Will asked, and Beverly huffed in surprise.

“You really are obsessed, aren’t you?” she asked, “let me guess, people say it’s haunted.”

Will shrugged again.

“Of course they do,” he told her, “but it’s funny. The house was left to his only living relative. She never even came to look at it. She just insisted it be left as it is, and it’s sat untouched ever since.”

Beverly furrowed her brow in confusion.

“That doesn’t make sense,” she said, “It should have been torn down, or at least sold. What’s that lady thinking?”

Will shrugged.

“She lives in Lithuania,” he said, “And almost no one can get a hold of her to ask. It might be a mystery forever.”

That seemed to interest Beverly, but only mildly. Only in the way of a friend who would listen politely. Not in the intense way it all interested Will.

“I wonder why she never even came to look,” Beverly mused.

Will shrugged again.

“They were cousins,” he said, “and maybe they weren’t really all that close.”

Beverly nodded, but Will could tell she wasn’t really thinking about it any more. She had moved on to other things.

“Hey, I bet I could set you up on a date with that guy from social psych,” she said, “uh, Matthew, I think. He’s ripped, and definitely into nerdy guys like you.”

Will huffed and pushed his glasses up his nose. He knew he looked like a nerd (not the cutesy kind from television. The kind you would avoid unless you wanted to hear about something obscure and likely creepy) and he liked it that way. It was better than looking like someone who wanted to socialize.

Matthew had actually asked Will out already. Will had turned him down very awkwardly, but as kindly as he could. Matthew had been upset, but he hadn’t done anything about it so far. He made Will nervous.

“No thanks,” he told Beverly, “I’m not really into him.”

Beverly sighed.

“Someday, you should get your nose out of those books and have some real fun,” she said.

Will huffed and lifted his book to cover his face in defiance. It made Beverly laugh again.

“Books are all the real fun I need,” he said, and most of the time he even believed it.

Books had been his only constant companion through his life, and they were a hell of a lot more reliable than any person he had ever met.

When a book made a promise, that promise was kept.

“You wanna go out tonight?” Beverly asked, “Maybe we’ll meet someone who’s into bookworms. Someone who strikes your fancy, even.”

Will shook his head. He was glad he had an actual reason to bail. He wasn’t really a bar hopping type.

“I’m expecting a call from a recruiter in the FBI,” he told her, “I don’t know how long the call will last. I expect to have a list of things I want to do after, to boot. My evening’s booked.”

Now, that wasn’t exactly the truth. Will was hoping for the recruiter to call, but he had no way of knowing when they would if they did. But the real reason he didn’t want to go out that night would have done more than make Beverly raise an eyebrow.

Beverly huffed in disappointment, but Will could see she wasn’t really upset.

“Alright,” she said, “you can go and be successful without me. It’s fine.”

Beverly pretended to be annoyed, but she didn’t push Will to go.

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Will stopped to get the mail on his way back to his apartment, and he barely stopped to close the door behind him before he was rifling through the handful of envelopes. Most were nothing special, but Will had calculated how long he could expect to wait before receiving a response to the letter he’d sent to Lithuania. He’s been doing this exact ritual every day for the past week, not at all discouraged as the days passed. He expected a response, whether it was the answer he wanted or not.

At last, Will came across an envelope made of soft, thick paper. His name was carefully printed on it in a hand that was quick and confident. The return address and postmarks confirmed its origin.

Will dropped the rest of the mail and flipped the light switch with his elbow as he walked further into his apartment, tearing open the envelope and pulling out the single sheet within.

His name was at the top, sans any salutation, in a spidery yet still confident hand. He wondered if the author of the letter was uncomfortable writing in English. He wished he knew Lithuanian, or Japanese, as that was her original nationality, so he could have been more accommodating in his own letter. He hadn’t trusted any online translator, so had only sent it with the hope he would be understood.

Will Graham,

Thank you for your letter inquiring after my cousin. Yours has thus far been the most polite and social such letter I have received in the past thirty five years. I had begun to believe I would never receive another.

However, regardless of your manners, and your desire to know more, I must deny your request. Hannibal was very clear when he expressed what he wished to be done with his

house and belongings. No matter what he had done in his life, he was still my family and very dear to me. I have no intention of dishonoring his memory.

If you have questions about him, as I truly believe you do, you are welcome to write to me again to ask.

I am sorry I cannot provide you with what you want. I hope you will understand.

Regards,

-Chiyoh Murasaki

Will sighed and dropped the letter onto the kitchen table. He rubbed his face and his eyes tiredly.

Will hadn't exactly expected anything else, but he had hoped. He had hoped he would have been the first in some time, as he had been, and that his courtesy in his letter would have gained a brownie point or two, as it seemed to have done. But they hadn't been enough to get him what he wanted.

What he really wanted was to go into the abandoned house of the Chesapeake Ripper.

Will heated up some canned soup as he went over and over the letter in his mind. She had said no. He didn't have her permission to enter the house.

He could write to her again. He could ask her anything he wanted. She might even answer some of his questions.

But that would take ages, and it was still only second hand knowledge of the man that fascinated him.

So, he would have to enter the house anyway. This was where his plans crossed the border into illegal. That was why he couldn't tell Beverly about it. Why she would try to stop him.

Will hadn't necessarily been expecting this outcome, but he had prepared for it.

He would have to break into the house, and there was no time like the present.

Will would have to drive for an hour and a half to get to the house, so it would be dark by the time he got there. He had already packed a backpack with what he might want, so he slung it on and headed out with a thermos of cheap soup in hand.

The backpack had several small lanterns that he could clip to his belt or backpack with extra batteries, backup chargers for his phone, a camera, a candle and matches just in case, notebooks and pens, lockpicks and a screwdriver, and a voice recorder.

Will used his voice recorder sometimes to take notes without having to write them down. It was good for when he was doing something visual and didn't want to miss anything.

Will had briefly considered dropping by a toy store to pick up a Ouija board, but he'd decided that would be stupid. He didn't even believe in ghosts, but if they existed, Lecter could make himself known without something as ridiculous as a Ouija board.

No, Will was *not* going on a ghost hunt. He was only doing research about an infamous serial killer.

Will pulled up to a dog park only a block away from the house he wanted. He didn't intend to broadcast his trespassing to anyone who might pass by. He would walk the rest of the way.

The house was large, and conspicuously clean. Despite being a famously haunted location, the outside wore no sign of vandalization or desecration. The sight of it, entirely dark and empty and silent, was of itself eerie.

Will climbed the fence into the back yard and immediately sighed in relief at what he saw.

The back of the house had a small garden that a large set of glass doors opened onto. It was sheltered, and should be easy to open without the use of his lockpicks.

Will set his pack down and pulled out his screwdriver. He turned on a lantern and clipped it to his backpack so he would have the soft glow of light for his adventure.

This was a skill he had developed out of curiosity rather than any kind of necessity. He had just thought it would be a fun thing to be able to claim he could do, and this was the first time he had used it in a dubious context.

A gust of wind blew around Will as he carefully began the process of unlatching the door. He pushed his glasses up his nose reflexively.

"I'm sorry, Miss Chiyoh," Will muttered under his breath as the latch clicked and he slid the door open.

The air inside the house was still and cool. Will wondered if the air conditioning still ran during the day. It would have to be maintained, which contradicted what Will had read about the property.

It was supposed to be untouched, but as Will looked around he became more and more convinced it was being tended regularly. There wasn't a mote of dust anywhere he could see, and again there was a complete lack of any vandalism or intrusion. As if he was the first person to break in during all those thirty five years since Lecter died.

Everything was contradictory.

Will pulled out his camera and voice recorder and began taking pictures. He was in a dining room, which was even better than he could have imagined. It was perfect for the Chesapeake Ripper.

"The dining room is furnished with a large, elegant table. This is where the man fed his artfully cultivated dishes to unsuspecting guests."

Will paused, the recorder still rolling as he considered what to say next. The dark room felt large and empty. He closed his eyes and imagined what it would have been like.

“The guests are dressed in their finest. A place at this table is an honor and a privilege. An exclusive right given to only those deemed worthy.”

Will turned and looked down the table, studying the expectant faces of the wealthy and beautiful.

“Not only are the house and company grand, but the food is both stunning and delicious. The chef is clearly both skilled and passionate about the art. The air is filled with praise and mingled scents of flavors, both a testament to the talents of the host.”

Will opened his eyes and switched off the voice recorder. He slipped it into his pocket and took a few more pictures of the dining room before casting his eyes around for where to go next. He wanted his journey to follow a pattern. A certain continuity.

His eyes landed on one door, and he was immediately drawn to it. He thought he knew what lay beyond.

As Will walked around the table to reach the door, he felt a gust of cold air through his hair, raising gooseflesh along his arms.

Maybe the house wasn’t as well tended as he thought. There was a draft.

Will’s breath caught in his lungs when he opened the door and saw the kitchen. He lifted the camera and began snapping pictures, the flash reflecting off chrome in brilliant, blinding bursts.

The recorder came out, and Will didn’t even have to close his eyes to see what this room would have been like all those years ago.

“The dining room was his stage, but the kitchen is where the real magic happened. Spacious, severe, and functional. Perhaps this was the closest anyone came to seeing the true man behind the mask during those evenings of celebration. He had fine taste in all things, and his specifications for this space allowed him to have complete control.”

Will paused as he moved around the center island, studying everything he could set his eyes on. One item, in particular, caught his eye and he huffed a laugh.

“He had a French press. The kind for making fine coffee. He was not lazy, and never settled for less than the best. During a party, he would have hired help of necessity, but he would oversee every aspect of the preparations. No move would be made without his knowledge.”

Will felt his skin prickle, as if he were being watched. He refused to give in to the urge to look around. He knew he was alone.

“I expect the kitchen to be the true heart of this house. Where the secrets and deceptions were woven, and presented elsewhere. Doctor Lecter was more himself, and more at home, here.”

Something touched Will's arm, and he did turn to look this time. There was nothing there, of course, and he rolled his eyes at himself.

"Get it together, Graham," he mumbled to himself, pushing his glasses up his nose again.

Will took a picture of the French press, and a few other angles of the kitchen before he moved on.

Will made a note of the stairs he passed as he moved toward the front of the house. He was making a mental map of the house. If he thought he remembered well enough later, he would draw up a map of it for a reference. If he could do it well enough, he might include it in his paper.

Will saw the front door, and he was filled with wonder. He snapped pictures and pulled out the recorder again.

"In an elegant foyer, Doctor Lecter would greet his guests, welcoming them into his home, pulling them into the beautiful world he created for them to see. A fantastic Dream."

Will laid his hand against the cool wood of the door, and his heart was beating excitedly in his chest. He was actually here, in the den of the beast. Within the tapestry Lecter had woven for the world.

Peeking behind the curtain.

"The pageantry was not only for the benefit of the guests. Doctor Lecter enjoyed fine things, and worked constantly to both surround himself with finery and become it. He would not do this if he did not enjoy it."

Will turned in a circle, gazing all around.

"Doctor Lecter entertained many trains of thought at one time, but one was always for his own amusement."

As if in response to Will's comment, the entire house made a sound similar to a sigh. Will smiled, wondering if it would have been picked up on the recorder. If he ever told Beverly about this, she would be sure it was evidence Lecter really was still here.

Will turned the recorder off and returned it to his pocket, shaking his head.

"If I believed in ghosts, I'm sure I'd be shaking in my boots now," he said to the empty house, "but you'll have to do better than that."

Will turned to the next room and opened the door. It was a study so large it could have been an entire apartment for a college kid like himself. Like the rest of the house, the study was immaculately kept and tidy. The walls were lined with shelves, each full to capacity with books.

Will breathed out in appreciation of the sight. He had only ever dreamt of owning so many books, much less having the space to display them all so beautifully.

Will pushed up his glasses without even thinking about it.

“Oh my god,” he breathed, “Oh, Doctor Lecter. We might have been good friends.”

Will went to the nearest shelf and gazed at the books. They were all hardcover and beautiful. He saw classics and medical texts, Shakespeare and Plato. There were so many, and they were all the kinds he loved the most. In this, if nothing else, Will’s tastes were aligned with Lecter’s.

Will couldn’t help himself. He reached out and touched the spine of one of the books. Despite having been left in an abandoned house for so many years, it felt as if it could have been new. It wasn’t damp or decaying as he would have feared.

“Oh God, these are beautiful,” Will mumbled to himself, “It’s like I’m the one who died, and this is my heaven.”

Will realized he hadn’t taken a single picture of this room yet. He shook himself back to the present and lifted the camera.

In the flash of the light, Will thought he saw someone else there. Someone standing by the bookshelf where he had just been. Will frowned and shook his head. The flashes of light out of the darkness must have been messing with his vision. He turned and snapped a few of the rest of the study, though he didn’t want to finish with the room. He wanted to stay in there and read the books.

Will sighed and pulled out his voice recorder again.

“Doctor Lecter did not only talk the talk, but he walked the walk. Anyone could have called him intelligent, but one would only have to see his collection of books to know it was true. These are not books chosen as simple window dressing.”

Will walked over to the large desk and touched the cool wood surface. It was completely free of dust, which Will considered a small miracle. The sheer cleanliness of the place was abnormal. Even a house currently being lived in should have some dust somewhere.

Will looked down at the empty desk top, and made a quick decision.

He set the recorder and camera down on the top of the desk and slung his backpack off to set it on the floor. He unzipped the pack and pulled out a notebook and pen.

He was going to transcribe his notes before moving on. He wanted to prepare for potential problems or mechanical failure. Just to be safe.

Will began playing his notes back from the beginning, making bullet points of anything relevant. It started with his entrance into the dining room.

When Will paused in the recording for the first time, Will was startled to hear another voice speak up to fill the silence.

“You came here just to look at me.”

It wasn't a voice Will recognized. It was rich and accented, and entirely foreign to him.

Will's own voice returned, a change in his tone because he had closed his eyes and imagined. It had been strange to hear that change, the first time he had listened to his notes like this. It was still odd, but he had grown used to it.

"The guests are dressed in their finest. A place at this table is an honor and a privilege. An exclusive right given to only those deemed worthy."

Will knew he paused again, so listened for that other voice. It didn't come, so he decided it must have been nothing more than static or interference that he had interpreted as a voice. Recognizing patterns in the random. Human brains were really good at that. His, probably more than others. He had a very active imagination.

So Will continued on with his transcription. There were no further anomalies until he spoke about the kitchen. The first pause as he was in the kitchen went unfilled, but the other revealed another apparent response to his comments.

"-no move would be made without his knowledge."

"Do you see?"

Will turned the recording back to listen to it again. It certainly sounded like a voice, but he knew very well he could be imagining it.

It wasn't as if it had really said anything that could prove it hadn't just been a trick or some kind of interference.

When Will played his notes from the foyer, he was not looking for a voice. He was looking for that odd, sighing sound that had come through the house just at the end. He still wondered if the recorder had picked it up.

"-but one was always for his own amusement."

Will listened carefully, but he didn't hear the sound he truly believed had been nothing more than an old house settling on its foundation. Instead, there was something like distant laughter, subdued, as if someone had just heard a reasonably amusing story.

Will huffed and shook his head. That had probably been the sound he had heard, only the recorder picked up the things he hadn't heard at the time. It was ridiculous to think it was laughter or anything other than what he had already decided it was. The house had been empty for years. Old houses made sounds, and that was the end of it.

There was nothing else even remotely questionable on the recording, so Will decided to go over his pictures. Some might not have turned out, so he might go back and retake them. He just had to know which shots didn't turn out before he left.

Will began to scroll through the pictures, smiling as he went. There was one from the dining room he would have to retake. It had a dark blur right at the head of the table. Right where

Will imagined Lecter would have stood to address his guests. Will wanted a good picture of that angle, specifically, so he would have to go back and take another.

That wouldn't be too much of an inconvenience, as he would have to go through the dining room to go through the back door anyway. There were a couple shots from the kitchen that showed similar dark blurs, but he had enough good shots that he didn't think he would need to retake any of them.

When he got to the pictures of the study, Will nearly dropped the camera.

There, clear as day, standing by the bookshelf, was a man. Just like he had thought he'd seen when the camera flashed.

The man was dressed in a dark suit with a red pattern of some kind. Something like window panes. He was slightly bent to peer at the shelf Will had been looking at before. He might even have been looking at the book Will had touched. It wasn't entirely clear.

Will zoomed in on the man's profile, absolutely bewildered by what he was seeing.

It was goddamn Hannibal Lecter.

Will glanced over to the bookcase, as if the man might be there right then, just waiting for Will to notice him. There was nothing to see, of course, and Will closed his eyes to calm himself.

Ghosts weren't real. It was some sort of trick. It might even be just his imagination. He hadn't slept in the last twenty four hours, and he had been obsessing over the man for months. His mind was creating something. He wanted to know Lecter, wanted to meet him, even. His mind was making up what it thought he wanted.

It was simple.

Will put his notes away and moved toward the door of the study. He was going to go through the rest of the house. There were still things he wanted to see.

Will went up the stairs and picked a door at random. He opened it and stepped in, his camera at the ready.

Once more, though, he temporarily forgot to take pictures. It was a bedroom, and Will didn't think it was for guests. The bed was large, and neatly made up with dark red covers. Mounted on the ceiling above the bed, to Will's amazement, was a large mirror. Against one wall stood some kind of rack or stand. It looked as if it had once displayed armor or something. He thought it looked like the kind that would have held samurai armor, and it even had a place for two swords in the front.

In hindsight, it both made sense that Lecter would have had the armor, and that it would no longer be here. The house was untouched, aside from the armor being sent, presumably, to Lithuania for Chiyoh.

Will began to take pictures, focusing on the bed and the mirror. It fascinated him, partially because it seemed somewhat incongruous to the rest of what Lecter had tried to appear as. But in some ways, it still fit perfectly into Will's idea of the man. Perhaps those who saw this room found it charming and eccentric. Perhaps his station and social standing kept him from being scrutinized, even for this.

Will felt another gust ruffle his hair, and it fell into his face. He cursed softly and brushed it away, hoping it hadn't left any streaks on his glasses. He pulled out the recorder and began to speak.

"Doctor Lecter had a large bed, reflected in a mirror mounted on the ceiling. I can only speculate as to what any of his romantic partners might have thought of it, but it is clear to me why it is there."

Will stepped closer to the bed, peering up at the mirror as if stargazing. In the low light, the surface of the bedclothes seemed to ripple with black shadows. It made him imagine a sea of dark blood.

"Doctor Lecter was a narcissist, but in a way that he managed to make alluring. He was unabashed in his preferences and tastes. Whether his station kept him from being scrutinized or mocked, I cannot say. Whatever the reason, Lecter had style. If anyone else were to have a bedroom like this, it would be considered uncouth or worthy or reprimand. For Doctor Lecter, anything could go, because he had fine taste and charisma."

Will's shins were against the bed, now, and he was staring up at the mirror. If he leaned forward just a bit, he would be able to see himself in the glass.

"Doctor Lecter enjoyed himself without shame, and created his home to optimize his pleasure," Will continued, turning to face the stand for the armor, "anyone who can do that, narcissism aside, appeals to and draws in oth-"

Will cut off with an *oof* as something pushed him in the chest, hard. He fell backwards onto the bed, the breath knocked out of him and leaving him staring at his own reflection.

"You do not believe in ghosts?" a voice asked. It was the same voice that had been on the recordings.

Will looked around for the source of the voice, but couldn't see anyone or anything that could be responsible.

What felt like a pair of cold hands took Will's face and turned it back so he was staring into the mirror again. Will tried to turn his head, but the grip held him.

Will wasn't really a fan of staring at himself in any reflective surface. He tended to avoid his reflection whenever possible. It was his eyes. Just like how he avoided eye contact with everyone, including Beverly, Will saw too much when he looked into his own eyes. What he saw there always made him uncomfortable.

“No,” Will gasped out, still catching his breath and not feeling he had much of a choice but to speak aloud to whatever had asked the question of him, “I don’t believe in ghosts.”

Will adjusted his eyes so he was staring at his glasses instead of the mirror.

That sound from earlier, as if the house was either sighing or laughing, came again. Will realized his recorder was still running, and he lifted his hand. His arm was forced back down by the invisible force, and both the recorder and the camera were moved aside. He waited to hear them break on the ground, or smash against a wall, but he didn’t. The entity didn’t seem to want to destroy his things. At least not yet.

“You do not wish to see yourself.”

Will bit his tongue to keep himself from gasping or saying something stupid. Whatever it was holding him against the mattress, it wasn’t fooled. Will struggled again, but the force was strong.

“No,” he agreed, but didn’t offer any explanation.

Will was horrified when he saw and felt his glasses being lifted off of his face. There wasn’t anything he could see that was doing it, but they were taken from his face, leaving him unprotected.

“These have no prescription,” the voice said, “You do not need them to see. You need them to hide.”

Will closed his eyes. He refused to believe what was happening, and he refused to look at his reflection. He might go insane if he did either.

“What is your name?”

Will almost opened his eyes in surprise from that question. It wasn’t what he had expected.

“Will,” he said, “Will Graham.”

That sound again, the sigh or laugh.

“A pleasure to meet you, Will Graham,” the voice said, and invisible fingers ran into Will’s hair, “I am Hannibal Lecter.”

Will did open his eyes, then. Because he wanted to see.

The voice no longer belonged to nothing. There was a man above Will, looming over him and blessedly blocking his view of the mirror.

It was Doctor Hannibal Lecter.

“Oh my god,” Will breathed, feeling his heart skip a beat despite himself, “It’s really you.”

The man's lips twitched up into a smile. One of his hands was in Will's hair, holding his head still. The other was as of yet unoccupied, hovering beside Will's jaw.

Hannibal Lecter was devastatingly handsome. Will had been able to lie to himself before, saying that had nothing to do with his fascination. He had no business being attracted to a man long dead, after all. It would never come to anything. But now, with the man before him and frighteningly close, Will could see the pictures hadn't even done him justice.

The man's eyes were dark in the low light, nearly as blood red as the bedclothes Will was now pressed into. His hair was combed back severely, exposing his sharp features and strong brow.

Lecter moved his hand against Will's throat and pressed gently. Will knew what he was doing. He wasn't threatening to choke Will. He was taking his pulse.

"Your heart is beating very quickly," Lecter noted curiously, "Is it from fear or excitement?"

Will swallowed, feeling the press of Lecter's hand.

"Probably both," Will answered, as honest as he could be in that situation.

That amused Lecter, and his eyes seemed to glow red with it.

"Why did you come here, Will Graham?" he asked.

Will didn't answer immediately. He didn't know what the right answer would be in order to get out of this. He didn't believe in ghosts, but he was pretty sure he was dealing with something beyond his beliefs.

"I wanted to know you," he answered eventually, the truth at its core, "I had learned all I could from the stories and the articles. It was not enough."

Lecter huffed a soft laugh.

His hand was still on Will's throat.

"Greedy, are you?" he asked, "you could not be satisfied with what you were given."

Will felt his face flush a bit.

"I'm fascinated," he confessed, "by you."

Lecter tipped his head, leaning in closer, so Will could feel his cold breath on his face.

"Are you satisfied by what you have found?"

Will felt his heart race in his chest, and knew the man could feel it under his fingers still along Will's throat.

"No."

Lecter raised his eyebrows.

“No,” Will reiterated, and continued, “I have so many things I would ask you, if you would answer. Now I know you are here, and could tell me if you wanted, I will never be satisfied until I have come to know every part of you.”

Lecter smiled. His thumb pressed gently into the soft flesh just below Will’s chin.

“From what I have heard, you know much more about me than anyone ever has. You understand me better than even Chiyoh, I think.”

Will’s face heated more. He was pleased. But not satisfied.

“Chiyoh would not give me permission to come here,” Will confessed.

Lecter nodded.

“I am aware. She would not go against my wishes. You asked, though. When she refused, you came anyway.”

“Yes,” Will said, unable to nod because of Lecter’s thumb under his chin and the hand still gripping his hair.

“You are not the first to come here,” Lecter said, leaning in even further so he was speaking into Will’s ear, “you must have known you could not have been. In all these years, many have trespassed into my home.”

Will imagined it. He imagined Hannibal Lecter, the Chesapeake Ripper, and how he would deal with anyone breaking into his house.

“You killed them,” Will said, “all of them. And you made them disappear. Or else I would have found them in my research.”

Lecter turned his head so his mouth was against Will’s jaw. Will’s heart was beating violently in his chest, and he felt his thoughts beginning to blur together. He had never been in a position like this. With anyone.

Lecter’s lips parted, and his teeth set into Will’s flesh on the back of his jaw. He bit down, and Will’s back arched against his will, a small gasp escaping him.

“I did,” Lecter whispered, “but I think you will meet a different fate. I have no intention of killing you.”

Will felt as if he couldn’t catch his breath. His skin was buzzing, and he was still entirely immobilized by Lecter, but he was desperate to move.

“What do you-” Will stopped to take a breath, “intend to- do with me- then?”

Lecter pulled away, gazing down at Will with an unreadable expression. At least, Will couldn’t read it just yet.

“Look at yourself in the mirror, Will Graham,” Lecter commanded, pulling Will’s hair and sitting up so the image was no longer blocked by his body, “tell me what you fear in your reflection.”

Will had no other choice but to stare into his own eyes. To look at himself in that mirror above him, see the way Lecter’s fingers twined in his hair and laid against his skin. He saw the man above him, saw the way they overlapped in the reflection. In the low light, they almost seemed to be one being.

And Will saw his own eyes.

“My eyes,” Will said, his voice distant and strange to him, as if he wasn’t really there, “What I can see in my eyes frightens me.”

Lecter’s grip in Will’s hair loosened a bit, apparently deciding Will wasn’t about to disobey. For the moment.

“What do you see in your eyes, Will?”

Will couldn’t have looked away if he had thought to. He was trapped by his own eyes, and the sight of himself in this strange bed, under this strange man who was not a stranger to him.

“We all have the potential for mercy and for murder,” he said softly, “I may be capable of mercy-”

“But murder you understand uncomfortably well,” Lecter continued, finishing the thought in a more concise way than Will had likely been set to.

Will’s own eyes seemed to be glowing in the mirror, bright blue and shining.

“I have darkness in me,” Will said, “so much. I crave darkness, and revel in it. Part of why you fascinate me is that I think our darknesses are the same.”

Will considered that for a moment.

“Most of it, actually,” he corrected himself, “I recognized you when I read about what you had done. It was like looking into my own eyes in the mirror.”

Lecter smiled, the corners of his eyes crinkling.

“So you came looking for me,” he said.

Will tore his eyes away from the mirror to look at Lecter. He no longer felt frightened. Even if Lecter decided to kill him at this point or going forward, Will didn’t really mind. He had found what he was looking for.

“And you do not believe in ghosts,” Lecter mused, taking the collar of Will's shirt between his fingers as if testing the texture of the fabric.

Will's flush grew, making his face feel very hot. He guessed he had to reevaluate his stance on ghosts.

“Did you believe in ghosts?” he asked, “before you died?”

Lecter huffed another soft laugh. Will was glad he didn’t seem upset about what Will had done or said. He even seemed pleased.

“No,” he answered, “I did not believe in literal ghosts. I considered them more metaphorical.”

Will made a soft sound of agreement, not realizing he had because he was considering what Lecter had said.

Lecter had lost his immediate family at a young age, lived in an orphanage, been taken in by his uncle who then died, and traveled to the united states before his uncle’s wife also died. If ghosts were real, why had he not seen any? There were certainly enough deaths around him to have provided the opportunity. That must have been why Lecter had not believed in them during his life.

“Why did you ask for your home to be left alone?” Will asked, genuinely curious, “If you did not believe you would be here to keep it.”

Lecter hummed thoughtfully, his eyes shining with amusement. Will thought he had never seen anyone so attractive. The danger visible in every angle of his body only added to that for Will.

“While I was alive, I did not make that decision. My home was left to Chiyoh, and when I found I had continued to have use of it, I sent her a letter.”

Will almost dropped his jaw at that. It was almost unbelievable. But because it was Hannibal Lecter, he could believe it. It was exactly the kind of thing he would do.

“Does Chiyoh know, then?” Will asked, “does she know that you’re a ghost? Does she know about the others that have come here?”

She must. She couldn’t have gone this long, not letting anyone into the house and not selling it to anyone, without knowing he was there and what he was doing.

Lecter leaned forward again, looming above Will with his devilish smile.

“Of course. I still write to her regularly.”

Will could hardly comprehend that. Lecter must have some kind of arrangement, letting him send letters to and receive letters from Lithuania. And Will hadn’t gotten wind of it during his research. It was absolutely the kind of thing he would have found out about. Letters being picked up from and left at a supposedly abandoned house. He would have been fascinated by it.

But Lecter had managed to keep it hidden. All these years, no one had found out.

“Of course, I suppose I may not be able to, soon enough,” Lecter considered aloud, “It has been quite a long time. Chiyoh does not have the gift of eternal youth.”

Oh.

It occurred to Will, then, that Lecter had known Chiyoh all those years ago, and presumably had not seen her since. It had been thirty five years. Chiyoh had either been young back then, or she was very old now. Will hadn’t found hardly any information about her in his research, so he didn’t know which it was.

“What will you do when she dies?” Will asked, “who will the house go to?”

Lecter tipped his head. Not as if he had never thought about it before, but as if he had an idea.

“Do not worry about that, Will,” he said, “not now. There will be time for that later.”

Will didn’t understand what he meant by that, but then Lecter pulled on the collar of his shirt and the second button popped open.

Will flushed darker.

“What do you intend to do with me?” Will asked again, his voice wavering slightly as Lecter’s clever fingers started to work at the next button.

Lecter grinned wickedly.

“Nothing you don’t want,” he said, and shifted so Will’s hands were no longer pinned to the bed.

Will immediately lifted his hands and gripped Lecter’s face, pulling him down and clashing their lips together. Lecter bit at Will’s lips, and Will couldn’t have helped the way he reacted if he had wanted to.

Hannibal Lecter did not kill and eat Will that night, but he felt he was being consumed and devoured regardless.

End Notes

Ghost story for Spooky season, anyone? Posting this while looking at a strikingly large and crescent moon, I'm really feeling the season. XD I hope you enjoyed this.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!